

REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance of the subject application are respectfully solicited.

Claims 31 through 46, all newly-presented, are pending, with Claims 31, 34, 35, 38, 39, and 43 being independent. Claims 11 through 30 have been cancelled without prejudice.

Claims 11, 13, 16, 18, 21, 23 through 26, and 28 through 30 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over U.S. Patent 4,791,492 (Nagashima, et al). Claims 12, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 22 and 27 were objected to and indicated as being allowable if rewritten in independent form. All rejections and objections are respectfully traversed and are submitted to have been obviated by the cancellation without prejudice of Claims 11 through 30, and the presentation of new Claims 31 through 46; Applicant respectfully submits that the new independent claims have been formulated upon the basis of the objected-to claims with several additional amendments that are not believed by Applicant to affect their allowability, as follows:

- (a) Claim 31: objected-to Claim 12;
- (b) Claim 34: objected-to Claim 14;
- (c) Claim 35: objected-to Claim 17;
- (d) Claim 38: objected-to Claim 19;
- (e) Claim 39: objected-to Claim 22 (although the expressions regarding “status” and “the number of the sheet discharge means required” have been deleted); and

(f) Claim 43: objected-to Claim 27 (although the expressions regarding “status” and “the number of the sheet discharge means available” have been deleted).

Favorable consideration is earnestly solicited.

The dependent claims are also submitted to be patentable because they set forth additional aspects of the present invention and are dependent from independent claims discussed above. Therefore, separate and individual consideration of each dependent claim is respectfully requested.

This Amendment After Final Rejection is an earnest attempt to advance prosecution and reduce the number of issues, and is believed to clearly place this application in condition for allowance. Furthermore, Applicant respectfully submits that a full appreciation of these amendments will not require undue time or effort given the Examiner's familiarity with this application. Moreover, this Amendment was not earlier presented because Applicant earnestly believed that the prior Amendment placed the subject application in condition for allowance. Accordingly, entry of this Amendment under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116 is respectfully requested.

Applicant submits that this application is in condition for allowance, and a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our address listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



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